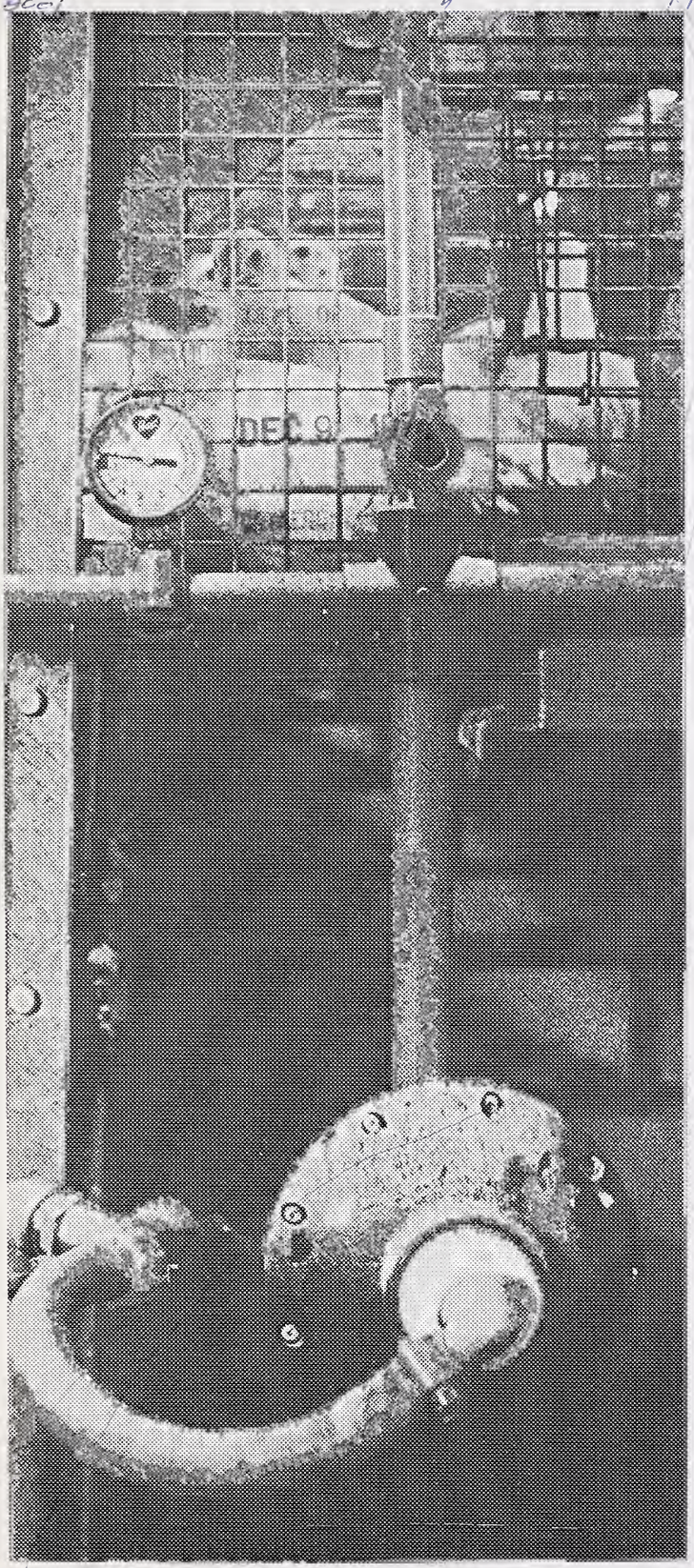
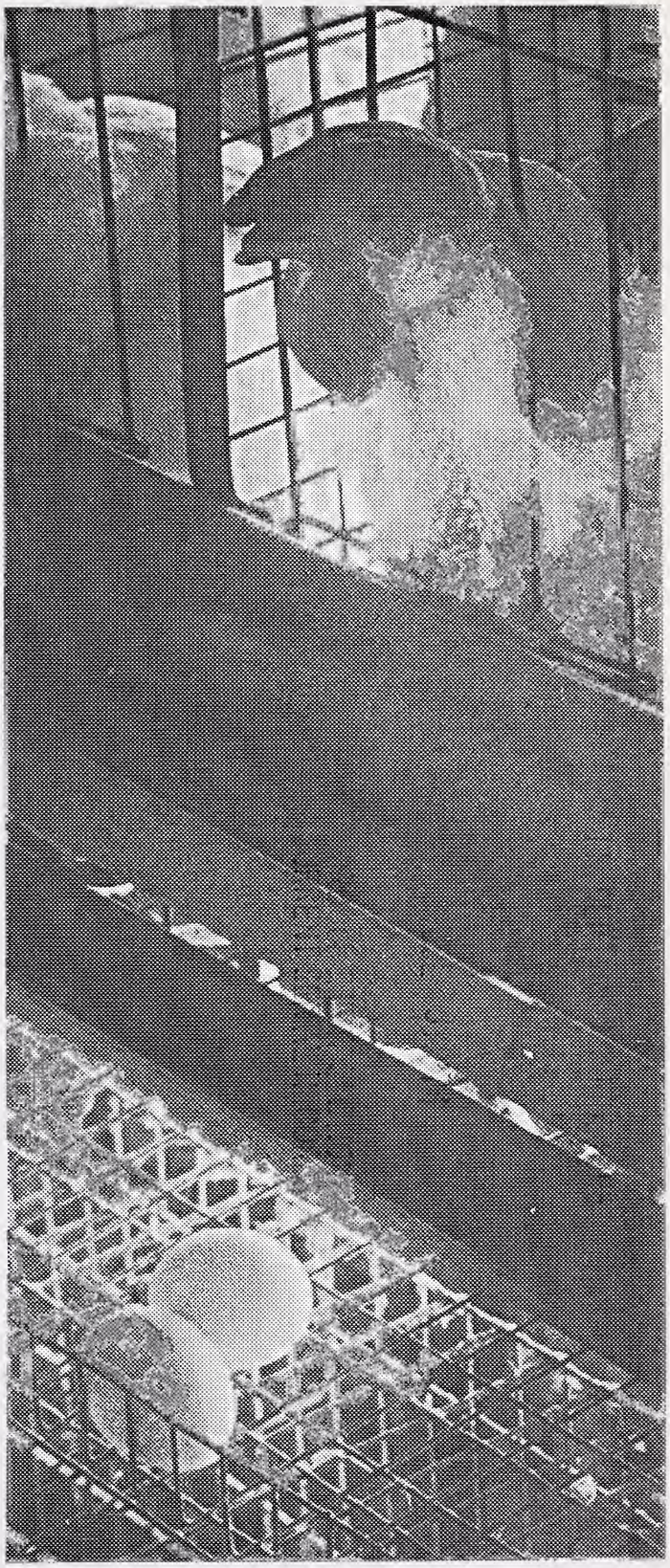
Food Moves on Fuel, It Takes . . .





1 GALLON OF GAS FOR 450 EGGS

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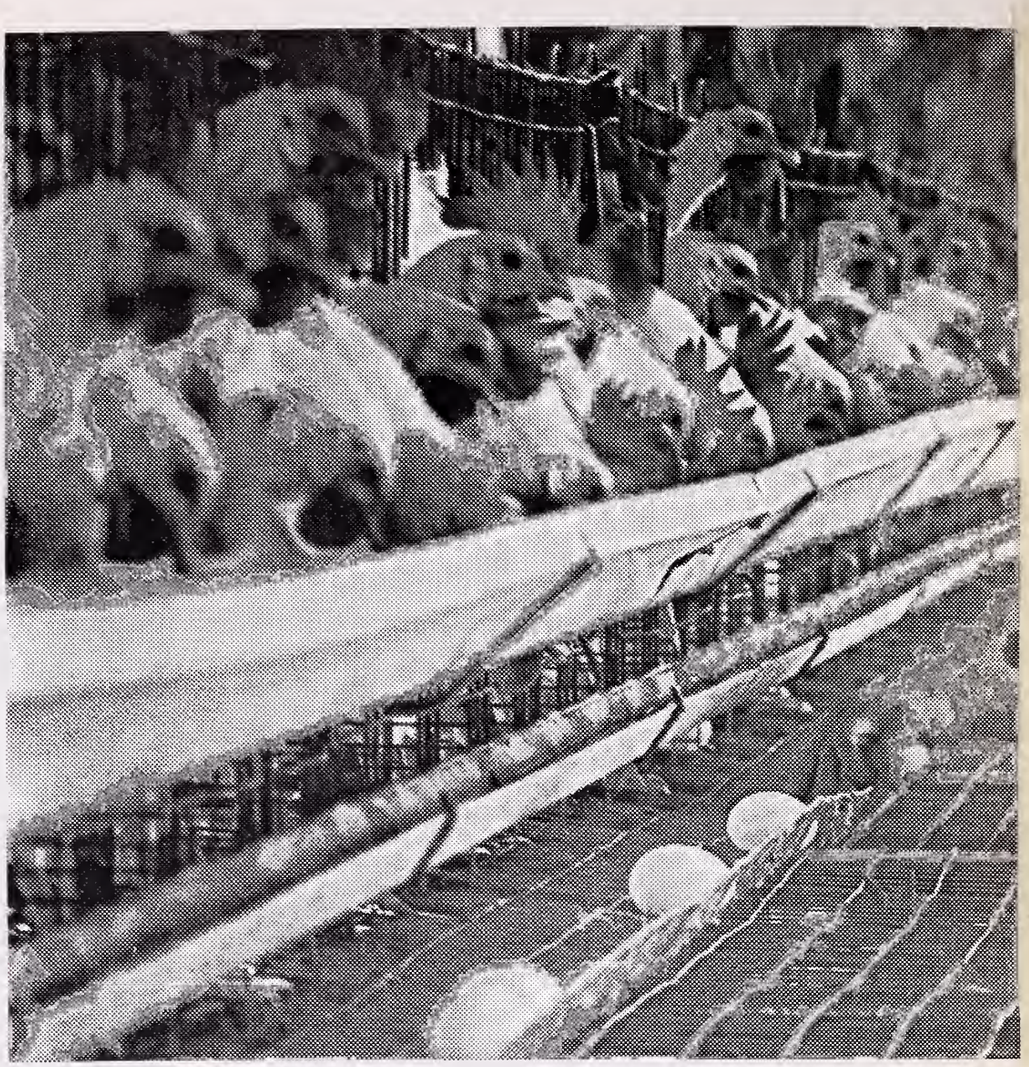

USDA Photographs
by David F. Warren
and William E. Carnahan

RIGHT: Eggs have to be gathered almost constantly during the day at this South Carolina egg farm (0274X220-30A). LOWER LEFT: The eggs are placed on an electrically-powered machine where they go through several steps to get them to the clean, uniform, packaged condition one is used to finding them in at supermarkets (0274K238-21A). LOWER RIGHT: All eggs pass over a high-intensity light to allow their internal condition to be checked (0274K236-9).

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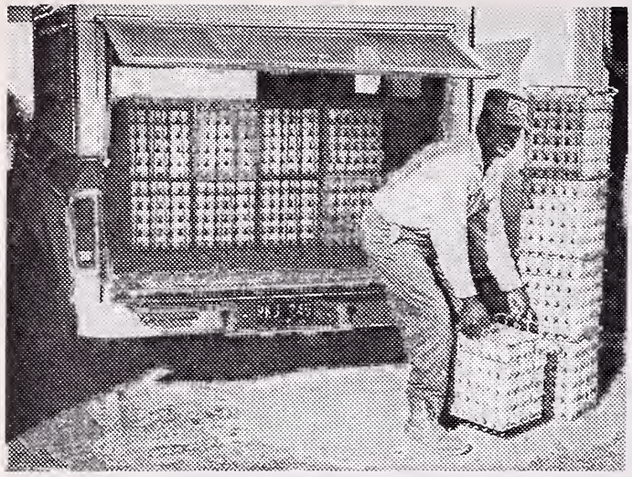
THIRTY-TWO THOUSAND EGGS a day are laid in Laverne Hurst's outsized henhouse—and they won't feed a single family until they get to market.

This Chesterfield, S.C., operation typifies modern egg production methods. They rely heavily on total organization, nonstop mechanization, and the fuel to keep it all going. The South Carolina egg producer says he burns more than a half gallon of gas a year for every bird in his flock. Most of the 26,000 gallons of gas he buys a year is used to deliver the eggs to stores and schools within a 125-mile radius of his farm. Also, his layers consume 7 tons of feed a day. It is trucked in daily from Charlotte, N.C., some 60 miles away.

Hurst, who has been a poultryman for more than 20 years, says he can take care of the 40,000 to 50,000 layers with the assistance of only two helpers, even though eggs must be gathered constantly. The eggs are trucked several times a day to his processing point. There, they are checked, graded, sized, packed, and cooled, mostly by automated equipment powered by electric motors. The eggs are loaded onto trucks and will be on their way to the stores or school lunch rooms, all within hours of being laid.

It takes regular bulk delivery of gasoline to power Hurst's eight trucks. Here, the energy equation appears in one of its simplest forms: a loaded gasoline truck on the way into the farm passes a loaded egg truck on the way out.



The Stark Simplicity of The Energy Equation: Gas Comes In, Eggs Go Out

ON THE COVER: A few of the 40,000 pullets in a 420-foot automated chicken house in Newberry, S.C. (0274K241-2A) are shown beside one of the 50,000 layers (0274K222-14A) on a Chesterfield, S.C., egg farm. The pullets arrive 1-day old from a hatchery and remain in these cages until they are 20 weeks old and ready for duty as layers. During winter it takes 100 gallons of LP gas daily to run the heaters which keep the house at the 90-degree temperature required for the health of the young birds. Electrically powered devices feed and water them automatically, and long rows of lights are turned on to change the length of day artificially in order to stimulate development of the birds. The layers also live in cages where feed and water are delivered automatically and electric lights increase the length of day. THIS PAGE, top to bottom: One of the eight trucks used for egg delivery is loaded and departs on its daily run as a gasoline truck arrives with fuel for the delivery operation (0274K221-1A, 0274K227-16, 0274K218-26A). A delay in getting gasoline could create havoc here because the end product can't be stored for long and the assembly line can't be turned off, as it might in an industrial operation.